

LIVELIHOOD IN SILWA

463 An oil-press was also started twenty years ago by a stranger from Kous, and he is still referred to as Koussy. At the beginning of every summer, the shop used to press oil from the locally grown sesame (simsim). Five years later the Omda (headman of the village) started another oil-press in competition, and this for some time gave rise to gossip concerning the Omda's prestige in competing with the stranger. But during the last war, as a result of rationing the oil, the flourishing undertakings closed, being unable to come up to the hygienic requirements of the regulations and the government controls.

463 Besides these specialized occupations there are two other occupations undertaken by families from the village, namely weaving and hair-cutting. The two families of weavers, with their old-fashioned looms, supply all the village women with their woollen cover (worn on going outside and also used as a blanket at night). They also weave the outer garments of the older generation of men (zabut), which they wear in winter, while the younger generation is gradually abandoning the homespun and woven wool for the factory-made cloth.¹

For the last three generations these families of weavers and barbers have been carrying on with their occupations, as they possess no land. The same applies to two families of fishermen; one of these relies entirely on fishing, while the other follows it as a supplementary occupation to farming.

Midwifery, and undertaking, are also specialized pursuits which have been carried on in the same families for a long time. The same is true of the offices of the priest and of the Sheikh of the village school (Kuttab).

463 From such a survey it can be seen that the specialized occupations such as carpentry, milling, pottery, and shopkeeping have been introduced by outsiders, who, though performing an important function in the village economic life, have not been entirely accepted by the villagers as fully-fledged members of the community. Immediately one of the villagers themselves engages in any of these occupations, however, this particular occupation is brought into a more conscious level of evaluation. As long as strangers alone pursue a particular task or occupation, the villagers are indifferent to, or deprecate, the value-prestige of that job. Yet if another villager can show that the job is as paying and rewarding as farming, then other villagers may entertain the idea of competing with him. The reluctance to embark on anything but farming is partly due to the fact that the specialized jobs mentioned have been started by outsiders. Moreover, there is no scope for much specialization of occupations, as an appreciable amount of this is done by the various members of the household. Barter, milling, basket- and mat-making, and even a crude type of building is being carried on by every household. It is the landless people who can only gain their living by working as craftsmen or traders. It is true that, as the technical skill required for specialized occupations is transmitted through the kinship lines, it is not surprising to find that most of these jobs

¹ Women do the spinning for the cloth from the sheep's fleece.

LIVELIHOOD IN SILWA

are almost hereditary, learnt by son from father or uncle. Parents who have land afford their children no other opportunity but of working on it, and they endeavour to keep them on the farm. 463 198

Ali maintained that 'agriculture is the best occupation and the most dignified of all, an occupation which is worth while following. Apart from aliens, there is no man who is not a farmer, and no woman who is not a housekeeper and a cook. A man cooking or sewing or a woman ploughing or irrigating the land is something unheard of in our village. Indeed, one of the reasons for marriage is the fact that some of the tasks are performed only by a woman, and there must be a woman to do them as there always has been. Very few of our women have travelled by train, and if so, chiefly to visit relatives in town or shrines of saints, while a much greater number of men go to town on private or official visits.' This statement shows clearly the rigid sex-distribution in occupation. Furthermore, farming, especially one's own land, is the most esteemed occupation for men, and it is only necessity that forces others to be engaged in any other occupation.¹ This attitude of mind renders the possibility of establishing an industry or craft in the village very difficult. The prestige attached to the possession of land is very great. A wealthy merchant is not socially on par with a farm-owner. Farm-earnings are the most meritorious of all earnings; in other words, they are the surest of all 'halal' earnings—legitimately deserved and thus divinely approved. In farming, one is grappling directly with nature and getting the produce out of the soil's depths, depending on or contacting no other human beings, whom one might oppress or be oppressed by. One has only to sow the seeds and attend to them and God will look after the rest. The same attitude of 'halal' earnings applies to fishing, breeding cows or raising sheep, where the results solely depend on one's treatment and dealing with the object to be attended to. Thus, according to Ali, 'the evils of man are avoided'. This is certainly a fabricated religious justification or rationalization of the most secure source of livelihood in this rural society. The statement of my informant shows, however, the psychological anxiety that is bound up with economic insecurity, especially in ventures that entail any dealing with people or involving human contacts. [58] [46] [58] [484] 463 554

It is also significant that to acquire land through inheritance as distinguished from buying it, is to be stamped with the hallmark of prestige and prosperity. To be called 'heir to land' means good origin and good status in the village. [56] 554 429

The reasons for the social importance of land and the emotional attachment to it are not difficult to seek. Economically speaking, land for generations has been the tangible bulwark against starvation and insecurity; it never fails to give reward for its cultivation, and thus it is a permanent property 'better than gold'. This analogy is derived from a well-known folk-tale about a father who had two sons, bequeathing to the favourite 554 423

¹ There appears to be no supporting evidence for this esteem either in folklore or in proverbs. There is nothing in the text of the Koran to that effect.

FOLK LIFE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE VILLAGE

sickness is a pious deed. It is often told to a sick person that holy people have suffered from one ailment or another and have endured it willingly for God. 753

All this shows how the villagers' traditional notions about health and sickness are mixed with magical and religious beliefs; God is the afflicter as well as the healer; it is He who has fixed the life span of every person, and this cannot be lengthened or precipitated by a second, much less a minute, unless He wills it. Together with this, there is the belief that hope and propitiation cannot fail to produce some expected results in certain crises of life. [761] [782]

The village has experienced some measure of direct contact with modern medicine as a result of the establishment of a health unit by the Ministry of Health in 1936. This health unit is a wonderful building, situated on the southern border of the village, and is composed of a maternity section, an isolation ward, and a general section. It cost the Government about £E3,000, yet it has never functioned properly or systematically as doctors who came to it could hardly endure life in the village for more than six months, whereupon they tried every possible means to be transferred to towns. The villagers appreciated the health unit at the beginning, but their resentment to it was ironically aroused during the malaria and typhoid epidemic of 1943 on the grounds that sick people were taken away to the isolation ward, and dying away from one's relatives and home is the worst thing that can happen to any person. Their hostility towards it is expressed with reference to its unfortunate location, it being near the cemetery; thus going to the health unit has become psychologically a bad omen. However, the establishment of the health unit has given folk-medicine the greatest challenge, and at present the villagers are becoming increasingly interested in medicine as such, alongside their usual traditional cures. In serious cases the doctor's help is usually sought besides the traditional cures, and it is becoming a sign of social prestige to bring him into the home of the sick; but remaining in hospital for treatment or isolation for contagious diseases is still resisted. 743 77 [164] [761] 752 77

Although one finds that the villagers have adopted certain items of material culture from the town, such as the use of manufactured goods, new types of vegetables, and some medicines, such adoption is a surface substitution. Their ideas about land ownership, the importance of children, family and clan solidarity, categories of respect relationships, sex dichotomy, supernatural sanctions, and the importance of ritual and ceremony in both social and religious life, remain almost unaltered. 177 369

There is, however, one feature in the village's social life that has undergone a certain amount of change as a result of changes in the economic conditions, and that is the role and function of leadership. Till very recently leadership has been mainly connected with families owning large plots of land; and such families assumed the responsibility and obligation for receiving guests from outside the village, providing hospitality for 178 627 648

FOLK LIFE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE VILLAGE

178 municipal or provincial government officials, and representing the village
 622 in government affairs. The Omda of the village is elected on the basis of
 642 his land property, and has been the symbol of authority and responsibility
 [625] on behalf of the village. Now, with the establishment of a police station,
 with the availability of more people who can write out complaints, with
 the decrease of the wealth of the village Omda, and consequently with his
 inability to provide hospitality in the traditional way, or to represent the
 village properly without extending his hands for help from the village, his
 authority has been flouted and people tend to send their complaints and
 disputes directly to the police station or to the provincial authorities.
 They complain that the Omda is not what he used to be in the good old
 days, responsible for reception and accommodation of government officials,
 generous to chance travellers, or to the needy poor.¹ In a conversation
 between the writer and the Omda, the latter answered the villagers' allega-
 tions by saying 'If the Omda or any other man in his position would stick
 to what these people expect from his generosity, he would run the risk of
 complete bankruptcy'. The decrease of the headman's authority reveals
 itself in the local remarks such as 'We have an Omda without land', or
 expressing their dissatisfaction with regard to some unsettled disputes, the
 villagers would say 'It is a village without an Omda'.

[554] By the weakening of his position, the Omda has lost prestige and people
 compare him with his powerful and domineering predecessor 'during
 whose days no one could open his mouth' and 'no children could play
 about'. In fact, this brings us to the personal qualities of the present Omda
 who is actually a pleasant and genial personality. But the people think of
 authority as necessarily involving an assertion of power and domination.
 For the same reason people praised my informant Mahmoud when he was
 in office as head of the ghafeers. If one wields power, one must be powerful
 and forceful, the villagers say, otherwise one would not be respected and
 feared. Gibb and Bowen mentioned something similar to this attitude to-
 wards authority in the Arab provinces in the Ottoman Empire during
 the eighteenth century. Al-Jabarti wrote: 'If the peasants were adminis-
 tered by a compassionate multazim, they despised him and his agents,
 delayed payment of his taxes, called him by feminine names. . . . The pre-
 valence of such a conception of authority confers privilege and preroga-
 tives and is enforced upon the minds of the people by long centuries of
 misrule and oppression, supplemented by the religious habits of stoicism,
 passing into fatalism.'²

178 The weakening of the role of leadership in the village is one of the main
 642 complaints that one quite often hears, either with regard to the prestige of
 the Omda, or with respect to the influence of the Arab councils or the
 relationship between the older and younger people. With disputes referred

[594] ¹ The tradition of hospitality in the village leads to the fact that bread and milk cannot
 [432] be sold on a commercial basis without bringing shame to the seller. This tradition still
 [261] persists while that connected with selling of milk is less rigidly observed.

² H. A. R. Gibb and H. Bowen, *Islamic Society and the West*, Vol. I, Part 1, p. 205.

FOLK LIFE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE VILLAGE

to and decided by a Government superior to local sanctions, the esteem of local institutions has been undermined and the traditional structure of authority has lost some of its grip. 178
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If the villagers have increasingly resorted to Government procedures in their disputes, they still consider both Government and Government officials as agencies of imposition and control, and hence to be feared. The identification of any Effendi wearing European suit and fez with a policeman is indicative of the role of the Government in the people's mind. The first strong impact of centralized Government was probably during the reign of Mohammed Ali, when its pressures were felt through conscription, the rigid collection of taxes, and the registration of land. For a long time in Egypt this apprehension held towards the Government was connected with education, since education and conscription were associated during the days of Mohammed Ali, while hitherto war had been the business of a certain caste and farmers were not concerned with it. The fear of Government authorities is reflected in the story of the old man in the village who had been very annoyed and did not speak to his son for a long time because the latter was entangled in a dispute for which the father had to be called to the police station to give evidence. The father considered his going to the police station as a humiliation brought to him by his son. 641
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It is also considered as a betrayal to report cases of infectious diseases to the authorities, as this would cause trouble to the family by involving the father and the mother in governmental queries and procedures. To keep away from governmental institutions was always the safest policy. An example of this is the failure of the branch of the Agricultural Credit Bank established in 1938 to help the farmers to have their crops secured, to borrow money accordingly, and thus to rescue them from falling a prey to usury. The bank has been in fact mainly used by outside crop merchants to buy crops from the village and store them until prices improved. It only functioned to its full capacity during the last war when governmental legislation compelled every farmer to sell part of his crop to the Government according to the land he cultivated. The villagers have never taken to the benefits of the bank, partly because it involved becoming implicated with Government procedures, and partly because it implied loss of prestige, due to dealing with interest, which is religiously forbidden. For the same reason, life insurance is never entertained by the villagers, nor by a great section of the Egyptian society as a whole, partly because it involves interest, as well as because it presents a challenge to man's destiny. In 1950 the branch of the bank in the village had to be closed down. Yet this does not mean that usury is not practised amongst the villagers in Silwa in spite of being condemned by the Koran, although it is not widespread and is avoided as much as possible.¹ 641
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¹ M. Gaudetroy-Demombynes, in talking about the Koranic prohibition of 'riba' (increase, interest) in Moslem society remarks that 'it was in that very society . . . that

FOLK LIFE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE VILLAGE

64) 197
Thus it is obvious that most of the Government institutions have not yielded the results expected from them in the village. So far the health unit, the agricultural bank, and the compulsory school have proved to be failures. This is mainly attributed to the lack of co-operation from the villagers as a result of the clash between their traditional views and practices and the new institutions, the purposes of which have never been explained or made comprehensible to the villagers.

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It is appropriate here also to mention the ideal of hospitality which has been affected by the process of social change. The villagers regret the waning of the idea of hospitality defined in terms of ability to render it when the occasion arises. Hospitality is conceived also in terms of offering food to guests, relatives, or casual *en route* visitors to the village. It also involves distributing wealth on ceremonial occasions such as circumcision and wedding, the failure of which would subject a person to severe criticism. To be able to conform to these standards is one of the chief attributes of authority, prestige, self-respect, and social recognition. The ideal personality type, alongside with the pious man, is the hospitable man. The common saying runs: 'He who is hospitable will never suffer in this world.' The hospitable person should offer without being asked, and should insist when the receiver is reluctant to accept; otherwise his hospitality is like that of the boatmen—who, being uncertain of their food resources, cannot be hospitable. By offering hospitality a person in fact creates bonds between himself and the partakers, where the latter respond in terms of respect, service, reciprocal hospitality, or at least prayers, in the case of the poor. The ideal is certainly that of giving away, and not of accumulating. Those who accumulate without giving are described as 'rotting', or like the 'cord that holds the knickers'—implying that they are insignificant and socially unworthy of recognition.

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This gradual dwindling of hospitality, so much deplored by the villagers, is mainly due to the fact that there are few families in the village who can afford to adopt the traditional ideal. This is certainly a result of the change in the economic structure of the village due to the constant division of land and the increase in population. Moreover, with increasing contacts with city ways, the villagers are more aware of the importance of money and the personal benefits derived from its purchasing power; and the recognition attached to hospitality, though upheld and valued as an ideal, is offset by the new acquisitive spirit. In this connection, my informant, Ali, told me that in the good old days if a visitor expressed his appreciation of an object or a utensil, the host usually offered it to him, but this is no longer the general rule. The spirit, however, still persists in the case of a woman visitor who, for instance, admires the tea offered to

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there developed, in the 9th and 10th centuries, the banking institutions and commercial customs which were to become those of Europe, and which are quite inconsistent with the Quranic Law'. *Muslim Institutions* (translated from the French), London, 1950, pp. 190-1.

FOLK LIFE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE VILLAGE

her whereupon her hostess usually wraps some dry tea to take with her, and the same might happen in the case of a pot or a jar which could be spared, being given to the admirer. The spirit of giving away is also reflected in the often-heard word 'itfaddal' (you may have it), which Egyptians in general say when a person admires any of the articles of clothes, food, or any possessions. 178
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The loosening of respect relationships is reflected in the attitude of some people with regard to the learned men and the so-called 'Koran-carriers'. Their absolute authority is dwindling, and one occasionally hears criticism of their knowledge compared to the 'ulema of the town. One villager once dubbed them as good for nothing except for eating during the ceremonies. 178
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On the whole, people who have stayed for a long time working in town show a great deal of dissatisfaction with the village way of life. Although the majority of them feel obliged to send money to their parents, relatives, families and children, they resent the excessive demands of their relatives, and claim that towns people are free from such demands. One of the people who was working in Cairo complained to the writer that his relatives, who were supposed to be responsible for his land and sheep, did not attend to them properly while he was away. He continued, 'They only want you to give them tea and gifts on your return, and turn their backs on finding that you have not brought what they expect from you'. 178
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The impact of urban life with its increasing pressures on the village has resulted in more and more strains in social living. The traditional social structure based on the solidarity of family and clan is losing some of its cohesive forces. The absolute authority of the old folks had been supreme, and no competition between old and young could ever be entertained. Now, the exception is not rare. The prestige and authority based on land property have also been questioned and is expressed in the common saying 'The beans are given to those who have no teeth'. With the social controls based on authority of age, power vested in the Arab councils, prestige of learned men in the village, go the clash between the ideal of hospitality and economic acquisitiveness, the emphasis on family rather than the clan, and a vague search for minding one's own business. 178
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One meets, however, those few individuals who have spent part of their life in the city, criticizing some of the village ways of life such as pride in the clan or the extended family; they praise wealth rather than generosity, and individualism than family ties. Such persons are pitied by their relatives as 'being influenced by the life of "being away" ghurba' or as having 'an eye on Paradise and another on Hell'. In other words, such expressions are the villagers' way of describing 'the marginal man'. 369
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Such changes of social attitudes, together with the increasing pressures of economic conditions, have created an atmosphere of insecurity and 182
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¹ See Everett Stonequist, *The Marginal Man, A Study in Personality, and Culture Conflict*, New York, 1937.

FOLK LIFE AND SOCIAL CHANGE IN THE VILLAGE

182 anxiety, weakening the stability that obtained in the traditional social
178 structure. My informant, Mahmoud, told me once, 'If the present people
of Silwa find you writing a complaint to the Government against some-
body, they will spontaneously offer their signature or their stamp without
asking you about the nature of the complaint, or even against whom'.
He went on to say, 'These people never learn a lesson. God sent them the
malaria epidemic followed by the torrent that swept their harvest, but
they never guard against God's anger, and they will go on eating each
other's flesh.'

155 Such insecurity and anxiety is bound to have its repercussions upon the
children as they grow up. Hearing remarks of dissatisfaction about the
environment and the people in general from their elders, the children
themselves feel insecure and become more suspicious.

198 To sum up, the folk life of the village has certainly undergone a certain
amount of change from the point of view of what some anthropologists
call the material culture, and the instruments of living. The villagers, for
instance, are more familiar with pecuniary values and commercial trans-
actions. More often than not, borrowing money at present is accompanied
[426] by writing a receipt, while hitherto this was considered to be a social
disgrace. Even at present, some creditors hand over the receipt to a third
person to keep it as a sign of his reluctance to accept a written bond. Like
Chan Korn, however, commercialism has not entered the primary family.
The writer has not heard of sisters or brothers living together doing
business with each other on a commercial basis, and it is almost incon-
ceivable of a father hiring his son, or a son his father.¹

[369] It is obvious that the villagers are keen to accept and imitate the
material symbols of city life, and it is on the material level that the folk
culture of the village has been relatively more exposed to the processes
of social change. On the other hand, social structure and organization and
values have not changed very much. Apart from the few unsatisfied
deviants, the conceptual and social orientation of the village folk life still
holds valid as the same principles that have guided conduct, behaviour,
and relationships are still maintained. In this pattern of folk living, the
[182] focal point is undoubtedly religion, as it continues to be the validating force
of life, explaining it, and providing people with their major intellectual
and emotional satisfactions and dissatisfactions in coping with the prob-
lems of life.

¹ Robert Redfield, *A Village that Chose Progress (Chan Korn Revisited)*, p. 66.

BIRTH, INFANCY AND EARLY TRAINING

be more attached to his home if his head has first 'fallen into it' at birth (masqat ar-ras). 844

There is no policy of any kind for limiting birth, either by spacing it out or by practising birth control. Birth control in the modern sense is unheard of, and in any case it is considered as a religious sin, and deemed an interference with God's creation.¹ A part of the married male ethos is not to regulate his sex desires, but to give them full play whenever the need arises. Continence is not a desirable thing for a married man, but to have sexual intercourse with his wife is a good religious deed (hasana). One should not counteract sexual desires but rather stimulate them, and hence the various devices such as special food and aphrodisiacs like hasheesh and opium are resorted to for sexual potency. The writer heard of no woman who has practised any devices to confer sterility on her. 842

The period of the 'forty days' is enshrouded in a great deal of secrecy and psychological delicacy. For fear of the evil eye, the influence of the evil spirits, or sterility, the mother should adhere to the rigid system of food, minimum movement and general seclusion and other taboos. This is the period in which another woman who wants to become pregnant might suddenly 'press' on her, and thus she could be hampered or delayed in her next pregnancy. However, when a visitor comes to the house the mother covers herself as well as the child and pretends to be feeling rather uncomfortable, either groaning or suffering from pain. In referring to the baby, visitors must be careful not to praise it openly, unless they use the safeguarding phrases such as 'God preserve him' (or her), 'may the Prophet's blessings be upon him'. On enquiring about the sex of a child, if it is a boy, his sex is usually hidden at first to be declared afterwards. 846 [754]

Concerning the child itself, one observes that it is announced and introduced in various ways. In the case of a boy, a 'gong' is produced in his room every morning and every evening; the purpose, as it is believed, is to make the child brave and not to fear any unexpected shock. Yet the reaction of the neighbours on hearing the sound is one of recognition that 'the so-and-so's are sounding for their child'. 851

The naming ceremony in the case of a boy is the second link in the chain of introducing the child to his neighbours and relatives. Actually the name is usually agreed upon before birth, though the ceremony is the formal occasion for declaring the name. Women have no formal congregation like the men, but a small portion of food and meat is sent to the homes of the female relatives. It is to be stressed that very few people have a naming ceremony for the girls, which is also a male gathering. The motive behind the girls' ceremony could be regarded as a kind of religious puritanism to counteract the pre-Islamic sin of burying the girls alive. 553 851 [562]

¹ A scholar of al-Azhar told the writer that the Grand Mufti of Egypt recently issued a 'fatwa' permitting the use of contraceptives and sanctioning abortion before the fourth month, that is 'before the child is gifted with a soul'. [78] 847

852 THE MAIN CHARACTERISTICS AND EVENTS OF CHILDHOOD

branches in their hands, and in front of every house they stand chanting at the top of their voices, while swaying their branches. They call out together, 'Give us the custom, either a pigeon, a fat hen, a cock, or an egg'. At the end of the round the group of boys return home with what they may have collected to partake of a meal well-prepared by the mother of the circumcised boy. This round is actually considered to be the female contributions to the circumcised boy and his family. In this way the boy and his age group not only witness the web of social reciprocity, but they are actively introduced to it.

852 The purpose of circumcising girls, according to the village midwife, is 364 to prevent any suspicion on the bridegroom's part that the bride is not a virgin. The midwife, with her surgical instruments provided by the Ministry of Health, seats the girl on a chair, or vessel, while three women [744] assist her by holding the girl's legs apart as well as supporting her back, a posture very similar to that assumed at childbirth. Girls are usually circumcised at a later age than the boys, when they are about seven or eight.

After the operation the legs are tied together at the thighs and ankles to prevent violent movement and thus render the operation successful. The ties are usually undone after a week or ten days, during which time the girl is fed in a similar way to the boy.

852 Anthropologists consider circumcision ceremonies as *rites de passage*; they 431 are undoubtedly of great significance to the family, as well as to the child, especially if he is old enough. It is an intra-familial activity, and an occasion for the exchange of mutual obligations. The father receives his due contributions from relatives and friends to whom he has rendered such an obligation previously. Fathers keep a book, where they register those who have brought their contributions, and the amount which they have given. Traditionally, the fact that someone contributes to your ceremony counts rather than the amount of his contributions, that is, the relevant and compelling force is the carrying-out of mutual obligations on an occasion of circumcision. To illustrate this, a father who has one son should contribute to all those who have sent their contributions on the occasion of circumcising, not only their first sons, but all their sons. It is obvious here that the qualitative rather than the quantitative aspect of the social obligation is the more important. For the last ten years, however, there has been an increasing trend towards contributing on the same number of occasions as one has received a contribution from a particular person. Discussion and wrangling occasionally arise as to the appropriate way of 'give and take' on such occasions. Some people have struck a compromise so that the contributions are equalized between the same number of children, whereas the contributions towards the extra number of children are less in value and are made with a view to keeping the social relationships intact.

431 In ceremonies of circumcision, wedding, and preparation for pilgrimage, contributions (nakout) play a considerable part, especially in the case of

*857 DESCRIPTION AND ANALYSIS OF CHILDREN'S PLAY AND GAMES

is instilled in the child's mind at a very early stage, not only after it knows how to walk confidently, but even as a toddler, when his older sister or brother carries him outside the home to sit or crawl around while others play.

• [178] Ali, my informant, commented that children have less scope and time for play than they used to. He added: 'The days of children's play have gone, and nowadays even the suckling has to worry about getting a living. Since the introduction of perennial irrigation the people have cultivated the land "from the sea to the mountain". Yet they have no "baraka" (blessedness); they have become more greedy and less godly.'¹ The relation between perennial irrigation and the diminishing periods of children's play did not strike the writer as a plausible explanation at first. After further enquiry, however, the real significance became clearer. In the days of 'basin irrigation', with the exception of attending to the water-wheel, most of the irrigation work was done by the grown-ups, as the water was more difficult to obtain and therefore more valuable. At present, actual irrigation of land is mainly the boys' task, as besides the abundance of water, it does not involve more than removing the 'lid' from the opening (siyala) between the canal and the field. Moreover, during basin irrigation very much less manure was needed to fertilize even the same size of land tenure, which meant more time for children's play.

[524] The influence of urban life has reflected itself in some of the sedentary
[369] games of the adults. On the market day especially, villagers who frequent the town or have worked there, can be seen playing a kind of 'draughts' (dumnah), or kind of 'trictrac' (tawlah) or cards. Because this type of play depends on 'chance' it does not win social approval, as all 'hazardous' [525] play is 'Kumar' (betting) which is religiously forbidden. On the other hand, children's play has not felt the impact of urban influences and one cannot find even manufactured dolls in the hands of children.

In the sociological analysis, the emphasis has been chiefly on the part that child play performs in the formation or expression of social attitudes, habits and skills and the ways of acquiring what is in Malinowski's phrase 'the basic grammar of the culture pattern'. Although for certain purposes the social and the psychological approaches can be separated, it is essential in the treatment of play situations to apply both. While one must examine the reflection of social norms in play, one must also consider the manipulation of the psychological forces, e.g. giving vent to aggression or the importance of parent-child relationship, in the process of growing-up as expressed in children's play. With the full realization that neither the social-cognitive, nor the psychological-symbolic significance, is by itself the real meaning of play, the latter aspect will now be discussed.

There are various theories that purport to explain play. Here we are not concerned with identifying ourselves with any of those theories advanced by Herbert Spencer, Stanley Hall, Karl Groen, or Sigmund Freud.

¹ Such a statement contains the elements of cynicism and puritanism which sometimes colour Ali's information.

ADOLESCENCE, SEX AND MARRIAGE

585 might have been the relations between him and them before marriage, the
606 newly created situation makes him no longer on familiar social terms with them. Traditionally, to remove this 'avoidance' the bridegroom's family should send within the first two months of marriage a ram to the bride's family as a 'reconciliation'.¹

This avoidance could be regarded as a recognition that, in the initial stages of marriage, much of the behaviour of the married man to the family of his spouse has to be modified and reoriented. Even if he is married to his cousin, avoidance of her parents is required as a token of respect. Adoption of new phrases in reference to his in-laws, house habits of reserve, announcing his entrance into the house, manner of dress and similar items of etiquette must be observed by the newly married groom. In other words, previous informality and intimacy are replaced by a degree of formality to show consideration for the new ties of marriage.

[591] This avoidance could also be considered as a manifestation that the husband, living in his matrilocal residence, feels uneasy and embarrassed in the home of a comparatively alien family; his ultimate home will be his patrilineal house to which he eventually takes his wife.² This custom also implies the psychological stresses involved in the new situation, where it is difficult to render the demands of consanguinity and affinity compatible, and where the support of the larger family unit has to be sustained for the maintenance of the newly created bonds of the individual family.³

Nadel explains such an avoidance in a similar manner. He maintains that in such a situation spontaneous shame and conventionalized sexual shame appear combined; for these cultural features express (and prevent) both the embarrassment between strangers (in a kinship sense) who are thrown together by marriage, and the embarrassment that springs from the awareness of the sexual occasion responsible for this new relationship.⁴

Such social procedures are implicit cultural solutions for smoothing transition from one state of life to another requiring concomitant adjustment and reorganization.

• [178] ¹ Although avoidance between bridegroom and parents-in-law is still strictly observed the breaking away from it does not necessarily have to be achieved through a gift of a 'laughter', but occurs quite often nowadays through the exigencies of everyday life after the lapse of some time.

² This is the ideal course to be taken, but, as mentioned earlier, other factors, e.g. lack of space in his father's house, the bride's parents' attachment to their daughter and her children, might keep the husband in his matrilocal residence for years.

³ This explanation is based on a similar situation referred to by R. Firth, *We, the Tikopia*, p. 343. This avoidance lends itself to psycho-analytical interpretation in terms of incestuous taboo. The uneasiness in the newly created situation could also be inferred from the 'mock fight' which could be classified, according to Van Gennep, as one of the 'rites de separation', while exchange of gifts and the partaking of food would fall in the category of 'rites d'agrégation'. Cf. Van Gennep, *Les Rites de Passage*, p. 198.

⁴ S. F. Nadel, *Foundations of Social Anthropology*, p. 332. The psycho-analytical interpretation for such a taboo, according to Rohelm, is that in this way an attempt is made to separate the wife from the mother, genitality from orality, and infantile dependency. *Psycho-analysis and Anthropology*, p. 423.

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

182 evaluate such institutions purely from the point of view of their immediate economic rationality and not as means of 'mutual adjustment of purposes in a total situation'. In such above-mentioned occasions, one can hardly fail to note the social values connected with prestige and the elements of reciprocity embodied in these forms of celebrations. Moreover, one cannot ignore the validity of their educative and cohesive functions. Since reciprocity is one of the major stabilizing forces in this community, its importance requires 'spinning out', since 'a solitary presentation of the principle would be ineffective'.¹ The economic method of interpreting social phenomena is one devised by particular workers as a means of considering such phenomena in the light of their particular field, and cannot be accepted as the whole or the sole explanation. The rationality of ceremonies and the functionalism of the extended family must be interpreted in the light of the community's social ends. In this connection, Firth remarks that '... economic activity is subordinate to social ends. It is only by studying those ends that one can see how particular economic systems work'.² It was pointed out how social and religious values render dealing in usury, or acceptance of compensation, repulsive to the moral code of this community. On the other hand, social prestige and rivalry combined with a weak ego-structure would explain why law-suits about land or other quarrels can be pursued with seemingly endless effort and expense, to the extent that such procedures might cost both sides more than the market value of the object under dispute.

[578]

● 178 Failure to assess social facts in their total cultural perspective has often militated against the best intentions of reformers. Compulsory education in terms of abolishing illiteracy has yielded negligible results, as shown earlier, even compared with the expenditure allocated to it. It has been related to neither the cultural needs nor the technical skills required in rural communities. Campaigns against infectious diseases must take into account the fact that, to the villagers, fear of contagion is subordinate to the rendering of reciprocal social obligation connected with sickness. The preference for reserving and offering the 'best food' to guests or strangers rather than be eaten by the members of the family for its 'nutritional value' must be viewed and understood first in terms of 'the people's values' concerning hospitality and generosity.

182

178 The adherence to traditional customs, beliefs, ways of thinking and living is the basis of the peasants' psychological security. That peasants rigidly adhere to their traditions and do not listen to 'reason' as explained to them by scientists or government officials has its root cause in this

[156]

¹ S. F. Nadel, *Foundations of Social Anthropology*, p. 400. It is worth noting that in this community, as well as in many other parts of Egypt, the standardised social comments are legion as are also the respective responses in occasions of work, eating, drinking, building a house, after having a haircut, after toilet, on wearing new clothes, after having a bath, and on many other occasions for which good manners necessitate a particular expression or ejaculation and responding to it in a particular way.

[576]

² R. Firth, *Elements of Social Organisation*, p. 133.

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

psychological factor. Professor Read has commented on scientists trained in the fields of agriculture, medicine, or economics, and brought up with great faith in anything labelled scientific, who do not easily realize that the peasant has a sense of security in his very insecurity. She further maintains 'that insecurity is the thing he knows, and he understands it in so far as he has always lived with it and adjusted his practices and his ideas in relation to it'.¹ 178

These remarks about some of the traditional ways of life in the village are only explanations of certain social facts and imply no value judgment. As Nadel maintains, the social enquirer at some stage in his analysis inevitably turns into a social philosopher and 'must posit absolute aims or purposes, and some self-reliant worthwhileness of actions, since without these assumptions his subject matter simply makes no sense'.² We believe that change there can be, and ought to be. But as we have been mainly concerned in this thesis with the analytical and explanatory and not the evaluative categories of enquiry, there is no point in dwelling on the latter here. 121

This study provokes also a comment concerning the generalization made about the nature of the face-to-face relations in a simple society and the value concepts attached to them. Some sociologists have maintained that, because of the integration of such societies, personal relations are smooth and intimate, and perhaps attractive, contrasted with the discontents of civilization and its disorganizing forces.³ This seems to be another type of generalization similar to that refuted by anthropologists with regard to the groupistic and individualistic nature of behaviour amongst primitive and peasant societies. 571

In spite of his emphasis on the group behaviour of the Arab fellahen, and on the importance of appealing to the whole community, Tannous also mentions incidents of rivalry, conflict, and competition among them.⁴ In this study we have noted how the constituent social units of this community give rise to tendencies of conflict and rivalry. It has been shown how the susceptibility to friction in this community's culture finds in the early stimulation of sibling rivalry one of its supporting forces. Both solidarity and friction are cultural expectations among siblings, and this reflects itself in the village structure as well as in its structural relations with the rest of the G'afra villages. It seems that the equilibrium of the community is maintained through an elaborate system of social behaviour

¹ Margaret Read, 'Common Grounds in Community Development Experiments', in *Community Development Bulletin*, Vol. II, June 1951.

² S. F. Nadel, *op. cit.*, p. 273.

³ See Kimball Young, *Social Psychology*, in his distinction between the characteristics of primary and secondary groups. This is also evident in some of Redfield's writings. See also Lewis Mumford, *Techniques and Civilization*, London, 1934.

⁴ Afif I. Tannous, 'Extension Work among the Arab Fellahin', in *Farmers of the World*, ed. by Edmund de S. Brunner, Irwin T. Sanders and Douglas Eraminger, New York, 1947 ed., pp. 78-100.

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

as other anthropologists, have viewed the efficacy of modern education in schools, and the problems that face the adolescent in the modern complex society. They have pointed out the gaps in modern education in the transmission of the cultural heritage, especially at the stage of adolescence, when transition from childhood dependence to adult independence is expected to take place.¹ 000

As far as Silwa is concerned, it has been shown how the child-training practices impress on the growing individual the social norms with certain dominant themes at different stages. It has also been noted that the child-training system reflects many of the social and psychological attitudes of adult behaviour. Attempts have been made throughout this work to discern some correlations between adult values and personality structure, and techniques of instilling children with 'adab'. Children begin to adopt some of the cultural values of the community even during childhood, e.g. assertive, aggressive, and rivalry attitudes towards other children, while there is submissive and obedient behaviour towards elders; observance of sex regulations and behaviour before puberty; the earlier attainment by girls of sociological maturity, and so on. It was also pointed out from observations, tests, dreams and Rorschach responses, that the children's flights of imagination are curbed at an early stage, thus making the children show striking interest in adult activities of farming, ceremonial celebrations, and kinship relations. The policy of child-training in Silwa sets the pattern of the social relations of individuals in their groupings, and incorporates them as well in the productive activities of the community. 155

Against such a background of the cultural tradition, one can draw certain conclusions. One can see the contributions that an educational institution may make in the social and economic life of a community. One can ascertain the difficulties encountered in its proper functioning. Furthermore, one can view in proper perspective the complex process which children undergo in adjusting themselves to school curriculum and its values on one hand and to the prevailing conditions of home training on the other. 000

Many educational thinkers have emphasized the importance of relating the school to the needs of the community. In this connection it is often assumed that elements in the educational content of a community could be transferred easily with benefit to the school curricula, providing stimulation, and provoking the interest of the learners. Such assumptions often ignore the new situation which has arisen out of the cultural contacts. Those who are thinking in such ways wishfully hope to recreate the past; but in their zeal they tend to ignore the basis of the community's educative forces.² In this community, for example, the inclusion in a reading book of some of the local fairy tales, or the inclusion of some of the children's games in the school, would be considered facetious and undignified by 178

¹ Margaret Mead, *Growing Up in New Guinea*.

² See M. Read, review of Gladwyn M. Childs' book referred to earlier. [89]

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Silwa

REFLECTIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

198
871 both children and adults. A faith in the practical subjects and in their educative value would be met with reticence in such a community. For such practical skills are considered to be of lower social status than farming; they are judged to be subjects unsuitable for inclusion in the school programme, as their acquisition occurs as a by-product of observation and routine.

000 Studies of this type based on the functional approach towards the place of the school in its social setting are proving to be valuable guides to educational reconstruction. They also provide a buffer through their pragmatic analysis, against the various winds of educational doctrine which sometimes beat upon educational theory and practice with the force of a gale.

Sociological studies have also contributed to the modification of many generalizations about the social and psychological development of the child or the adolescent. It is becoming increasingly apparent that no study can make sweeping generalizations about the child or the adolescent, as we have always to ask questions about the conditioning factors, e.g. the home and environmental background; or, in a modern community, the class to which the child belongs. An American sociologist maintains that in American education, 'the ineffectiveness of middle-class sanctions upon the great masses of lower-class children is the crucial dilemma of our thoroughly middle-class teachers and school systems. Thus lower-class children remain "unsocialized" and "unmotivated" from the middle-class point of view.'¹

If one talks in general terms about the development of children's imagination, the stages when they become capable of responding to authority, or of assuming responsibility, and about the conflicts of personal adjustment, he is denying the conditioning effect of social forces which play a potent part in the quality of the individual's development and in his social adjustment. Adult attitudes and expectations must be taken into consideration. It has been shown in this study how, in Silwa as among the Manus, children are almost completely deprived of imaginative potentialities and are very matter-of-fact at a very early stage. Children do not tinker with adult themes of life in their play as preparation for their future life.

To expect that certain characteristics of child development are absolute, irrespective of the adult world, would be to ignore the strength of the cultural tradition.² The study of the 'psychology of child development' must be contingent on that of the 'sociology of child development'.³ The Committee on Human Development of the University of Chicago main-

¹ Allison Davis and Robert Havighurst, 'Social Class and Colour Differences in Child-Rearing', in *Personality in Nature Society and Culture*, p. 263. See also their book, *Father of the Man*, Boston, 1947, pp. 10-11.

² M. Mead, *Growing Up*, pp. 267-8.

³ An interesting example of research in the sociology of child development is a field study of social influence in groups of children by R. Lippitt, N. Polansky and S. Rosen, 'The Dynamics of Power', in *Human Relations*, Vol. V, No. 1, 1952.

APPENDIX I

him was that of cousin-uncle, and I used to call him Uncle Mahmoud, 159 which he used to appreciate very much.

Mahmoud is the eldest and head of a family of four brothers and a half-sister, as well as a cousin living together with them. Only one of the four brothers is a full brother of Mahmoud, the other being half-brothers, while the cousin is from the paternal side, and is also the half-brother (uterine) of the other two from their mother.

Mahmoud himself was first married to his cousin, whom he divorced after having a daughter from her. He remarried, but only one daughter has survived from his second wife, and the death of his son at the age of three was due, as he thinks, to the sorcery of his first wife. Two years after the death of his first wife, her daughter was married to Hassan, Mahmoud's cousin: there is one son. One of his brothers is married to a close relative of Mahmoud's wife, and all the brothers at present are married and work together, although recently two of them went to live in new and separate houses. Before the last two brothers married, all of them were working on their land as well as three acres they usually rent. More than ten years ago one of the brothers went off to work in Cairo as a domestic servant, and since then he has never settled in the village, but pays visits occasionally to see his wife and family.

None of the brothers is literate, except the youngest, who had been conscripted into the army and has there learned to read and write as part of the army's literacy campaign for conscripts. After completing his service he volunteered as a lorry driver in the army, where he works now, leaving his wife and a small boy under the guardianship of his brother, Mahmoud.

Returning to Mahmoud himself, he worked as a farmer until the age of thirty, then he became the head of the village police (ghafeer) and this job seems to have given much scope for his pride and energy. He would usually talk about the order he maintained in the village while he was occupying that post, and emphasize the fact that everybody respected and even feared him. He was dismissed from this post after he had struck someone in a fight, and for this offence he was imprisoned for eighteen months. [683]

During his work as head of 'ghafeers', Mahmoud related with great pride that he managed to prevent the women from going to fill their jars from the Nile on account of certain rumours which had spread in the village about their behaviour along the agricultural road, and this temporary action from his side was met with general approval. It also befell him to carry out the wishes of the preacher from the city, to prevent women from following the bier of the deceased as mentioned in the chapter on social change. He added that, after his time, women reverted to their old practice. [626] [198]

Mahmoud goes to town now and again on business, but, apart from such interruptions, he spends most of his time in the village tending to his farm. Three years ago, one of his half-brothers had a disagreement with

CHAPTER I

CHANGELESSNESS

The fellaheen (*), that is to say the country labourers, of Egypt, whose life is the subject of the following chapters, represent something more than a mere class. As a uniform, autochthonous mass, which constitutes more than three quarters of the total population, they may rightly be called the people of Egypt.

This people, which produced the earliest civilisation, or at any rate a civilisation of great originality that has lasted for fifty centuries, shows exceptional powers of survival and persistence.

The fellaheen have changed their masters, their religion, their language and their crops, but not their manner of life. From the distant epochs of the Old Kingdom to the climax of the dynastic period the Egyptian people preserved and maintained itself. Under foreign domination, for years or centuries at a time, by Persians, Greeks, Romans, Byzantines, Arabs, Turks, French and English, it has remained unchangingly the same. Even today the fellaheen play practically no part in the Egyptian renaissance, or the movement for independence and progress.

They were at first pagans carrying totemism to the point of zoolatry, then for ten centuries Christians who reached the heights of asceticism and martyrdom. They made no difficulties about accepting Islam, and yet thirteen hundred years of Mohammedanism have done little to change their fundamental beliefs.

They are a receptive, yet resistant people; patient, but unyielding. Although they have dwelt so long at the crossroads of international traffic, in a country which has been the scene of earth-shaking events, they remain as calm and unmoved as the depths of the sea beneath a storm.

175 The map of the world has been changed a hundred times, and with it the map of Egypt; but fundamentals have not changed and the fellaheen have remained the same.

They have taken the strain of all these changes, and never flinched. Violent and repeated shocks have swept away whole peoples, as can be seen today from the ruins of North Africa or Chaldea, which stand deserted in lands peopled by an alien race. But the fellaheen have held firm and stood their ground.

[651]
[669] The history of Egypt includes wars and revolutions in plenty, but the people have taken no part in them. Only at one period, between A.D. 725 and A.D. 830, is there any mention of risings in the countryside. Crushed by the taxation of their Arab conquerors, the fellaheen abandoned the villages where they were born and settled elsewhere. These evasive movements became almost general, but the repression was so severe that the Copts decided upon open revolt. Six times they rose, but without unity of plan or action. Six times they were savagely put down. They are not of the stuff of which rebels are made. Moreover, even in these revolts the mass of the people remained unaffected.

175 They are as impervious and enduring as the granite
178 of their temples, and as slow to develop, once established, as this form of art proved to be. The glimpses of their daily life which we get from the wall paintings of Pharaonic tombs or from Coptic legend, from Arab historians or the "Description of Egypt" (*), from early English researchers or the travellers of our own day, seem to form a single sequence. We get the impression that all these scenes, though separated by so many centuries, only repeat and confirm one another.

105 This is not merely an impression. We can see the fellah
178 using the same implements—the plough, the *shadûf*, the *saqia*, the winnowing-fork, the sickle and the straw basket; the same methods of treating the body—tattooing, circumcision, colouring with *kohl* and henna, plucking of hair; and many of the same marriage and funeral customs. Through the pages of Herodotus, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Maqrizi, Vansleb, Père Sicard and Volney we can recognise the same fellah. No revolution, no evolution.

Here lies the heart of the problem. How are we to ¹⁷⁸ explain this physical stability, this changelessness both mental and social, this enduring and extraordinary sameness in a people ?

The answer lies in the soil. The uniformity of Egyptian ¹⁷⁸ art is to be explained by its assimilation to the natural ¹²¹ environment. The level ridges and steep cliffs on the edge of the Arabian and the Libyan deserts have produced the long, low, solid outline of the Pharaonic temples, as well as the regular cornice which finishes them. The papyrus, lotus, or reed which grew along the Nile were stylised in the pillars and capitals which we now call papyriform, lotiform, or proto-Doric.

For ages past an intimate bond, which successive masters of Egypt have used all their powers to draw even tighter, has existed in the Nile Valley, between nature and the human mind.

The fellah stands between the hammer and the anvil, ¹⁷⁸ between the soil and the masters of the soil. Yet by the very ¹²¹ nature of his life he remains nearer to it than to them; and ¹⁵¹ their hammer-blows beat him yet closer to the ground. This union is so real that the fellah's masters, who are also the owners of the soil, through owning the soil also own the fellah. Thus the fellaheen owe their astonishing uniformity and stability to their close association with an element no less uniform and stable, namely the soil of Egypt. There has grown up between these two a bond which is at once firm and elastic; a balanced and self-sufficient interdependence which no crisis or government can disturb. Here is, in the words of Sully-Prudhomme, "that stern, immemorial wedlock of a land and a people which have made each other". This unbroken contact of people and land has caused a perpetual interplay of action and reaction, of likeness and difference, which strengthens the indissoluble union of the two. On the one hand, we have nature, the physical environment in its broader sense, that is to say the climate and the sunshine and above all the water and loam of the Nile, its flora and its enveloping sands. On the other hand we have man, the social element, that is to say the fellah class, shut in no less by its habits than by its villages; dense, gregarious, but isolated and unorganised, closer to the soil, which it understands, than to the State, of which it knows nothing.

- 178 But we must at all costs avoid here even the appearance
121 of determinism. The fellah is no more the product of the
Egyptian countryside than the countryside is the product
of the fellah. There is no question here of inevitability, or
any determining influence. Man is free, and this freedom
is to be defined as "the power of self-determination".

241 Man is free, and cultivation remains contingent on his
249 will. There are infinite possibilities, among which the
will of man — not of the fellah, but of his master — chooses
this or that, according to circumstances. At one time, the
vine was grown on Egyptian soil. Grapes make wine, and the
veto of the Koran killed the vineyards. Not long ago, vast
areas were planted with tobacco, but the Government has
now forbidden this. Maize of American origin, and cotton,
introduced in the nineteenth century, are now chief among
the crops. Tomorrow some new crop may cover the fields.
No law of necessity, whether of climate or soil, determines
once and for all the agriculture of Egypt; much less, then,
human life. At the same time the climate and vegetation
of Egypt exert a characteristic influence on those who live
in, and on, the country.

181 In the case of the town-dwellers and industrial workers,
183 the bond between nature and man is looser; the impress
132 of the physical environment is softened and neutralised by the
133 stronger social, civic and political influences. This makes
these classes less stable, but more progressive.

121 The countryman, on the other hand, is moulded directly
by the soil. Febvre justly criticises the generalisations of
Ratzel and Brunhes on the influence of physical environ-
ment (*); but without granting their theories anything like
universal applicability we may recognise that they do apply
sufficiently to agricultural communities, and especially to
the Egyptian fellaheen.

It will become clear, indeed, that the monotony, uni-
formity and productiveness of the Nile Valley have their
exact counterpart in the characteristics of the fellah
community. These two are not parallel but correlative.
They meet and crystallise in a distinct manner of life, which
is at once a geographical and a social phenomenon. It will
also become clear that the water and mud of the Nile enter
into and in great part explain the whole life of the fellah,
his work and his home, his body and his soul, and impart

585 The bridegroom too has made himself ready. He
 [515] has had a bath in his best friend's house. His best clothes
 have been brought, and the *mizayen* has come to groom him
 and put henna on his hands. Outside a crowd of people are
 waiting for him to come out. At last he is ready. His
 men friends ring him round with candles, and a torchlight
 procession begins. He holds a white handkerchief over his
 face as if to mask himself, as they strike up songs of love and
 pleasure (*mawâṭṭ*), which mingle with the sound of shots.
 Meanwhile the women throw pinches of salt over the men.
 When the family house is reached, the bridegroom's friends
 snatch him from the crowd and drag him in. The young
 bride is already waiting, surrounded by the women who
 have tested her virginity, and the marriage is consummated
 without much secrecy. In the street outside, amidst the
 cries of the crowd, singing and dancing goes on all night and
 all the next day. Coloured sweets and treacly pastries are
 [262] handed round. On this day there is no thought of economy.
 After his marriage the young man spends a week or a fort-
 night without going to work, and during this time he is called
 "Prince" (*amîr*).

592 The household is thus begun, but for several years more
 606 the couple will be dependent on the husband's family. If
 554 the wife is clever, obeys her mother-in-law, and bears her
 595 husband many male children, he will not take another wife.
 The same will happen if he is poor, and cannot afford the
 expenses of another wedding.

595 It is perfectly legal for a Moslem to have four wives, or
 586 to divorce. But the fellah makes little use of this Koranic
 178 liberty. In the last ten years a considerable decline has
 been noted in polygamy and divorce. The reason, according
 to a provincial official, is not so much the progress of civilisa-
 tion as the increasing poverty of the fellaheen. Lower
 Egypt being richer, more bigamous marriages are recorded
 there than in Upper Egypt.

586 Divorce is carried out merely by repeating three times
 the words of repudiation (*talag*). Nothing could be easier,
 but as he is obliged to pay maintenance to the divorced
 wife, and a new dowry to the one who takes her place, the
 fellah usually keeps to one wife. Other details also enter
 162 into the matter. Statistics show that the country population
 585 comprises almost as many men as women. For the whole

branches in use to adorn the bride's canopy and the tombs of the dead. 245

The day after his wedding the bridegroom strips a palm branch, splits it at the point and goes to touch his friends with it for good luck. To strike a man with a green palm branch brings blessing. Palms to the fellah are like flowers, and there can be no procession or wedding or funeral without them. [585] 777

The pollen of a male date-palm mixed with water is a charm against childlessness. On the other hand, to swallow one, two, or three date-stones will prevent childbearing for as many years. 777 842

Magic and medicine are confused in the traditional use of the products of the earth to preserve or recover health. The startling pharmacopœia of the fellaheen is to be put down partly to experience but chiefly to superstition. They have taken whatever came to hand and used it : for the bowels an infusion of palm or maize leaves ; for the eyes onion juice or charred cotton ; for broken bones acacia gum ; for swellings or rheumatism bandages of hemp. The treatment clearly depends on what plants they have within reach, and the effect, in great part, on credulity. 755 757 278

These peasant traditions, unquestioned and irresistible, are largely superstitious. Miss Blackman gives the greater part of her book (**) to describing superstition in its thousand forms, as if the whole life of the fellaheen were passed in these sub-rational affairs. Too much weight, probably is laid on fellah superstitions. They are recorded with a certain condescension, and in spite of all that has been published on the subject there are still many gaps. However, there is no point in enriching the collection, since there is nothing original in it. Most of these customs are common to the whole of the East or to Islam. The rest, which go back beyond Christianity to ancient Egypt, are one more illustration of the changelessness which was the subject of our first chapter. 183 171 178

It is certain that these benumbing practices of the fellaheen are even more effective than their manner of life in isolating them and bringing about that withdrawal which 'man creates for himself by the whole structure which he founds on his own labour'. To a way of living which itself weighs him to the ground the fellah adds the burden of these ritual observances.

F
184 cratic forms can never have been so misleading. But
665 that is not the worst evil, as we shall see.

E
652 The economic progress of Egypt is as striking as its
439 political development. The country's financial prosperity
651 is remarkable. Even before the war the State had a gold
reserve of thirty million pounds, and between 1925 and 1935
it almost doubled. The budget never shows a deficit. The
constant increase of revenues from the Customs and the
railways, the capital of the limited companies, both foreign
and Egyptian, the development of local industry (the Bank
Misr companies employ 200,000 men), the place of Egyptian
cotton on the world's market, the improved quality of the
crops, the systematic extension of perennial irrigation and
therefore of agricultural production — all these are signs
of prosperity.

F
178 But this progress has resulted in no increased well-
being for the fellah. His standard of life and his methods
of work have remained unchanged, for all this progress was
based on his labour. His ignorance and stagnation were the
conditions for this capitalist prosperity.

F
[248 'The so-called rich crops', wrote an economist some time
249] ago, 'that is to say cotton and sugar-cane, will not fail to in-
fluence the evolution of the fellaheen, since the one develops
capital, which will effect an improvement in agriculture, and
the other industry, which will sharpen the fellah's wits by
the use of machinery.'

F
511 In fact, neither capital nor industry has helped the
fellaheen. Both before and after the boom of 1920 their
financial affairs were as bad and their poverty as great as a
hundred or a thousand years ago. There are even signs, and
that in official reports (''), of a lowering of the standard of
living. It is the fashion to attribute this to the increase
in the population, though 'Aly Shamsy Pasha also cites
'the unequal distribution of agricultural wealth' (''). In the
midst of this poverty in prosperity there are still landowners
whose incomes are L.E. 12,000 to L.E. 15,000 a year.

F
183 Yet here again the evil must not be exaggerated. There
may be something worse than poverty — ignorance.

E
873 The intellectual revival of Egypt has been dazzling.
Under the reign of Fuad I especially, learned institutions
were multiplied. The Fuad I University, which did not
exist twenty-five years ago, has today nearly 10,000 students,

and new Faculties and Departments have been created.^{E 873}
 In 1942 a second University was founded, at Alexandria.
 The Government's primary and secondary schools count ^E
 their pupils by hundreds of thousands, and are endowed ^[872]
 with all the latest improvements. Then there are nu-
 merous private schools of older foundation. Even the
 ancient Moslem University of Al-Azhar has felt the wind
 of reform, and has established new branches, the Insti-
 tutes of Shubra, Tanta, Assiut, and Qena. Three
 thousand teachers are busy with elementary education in
 the villages. Egyptian publications, whether newspapers,
 reviews, or books, compare in style and content with the
 best in Europe, and are a model for all the Arabic-speaking
 countries. Yet the most important newspaper, *Al-Ahram*,
 the *Times* of the Near East, has a daily circulation of not
 more than 100,000, and the farmers' review, *Zamil el-*^{E 204}
Fellah, which is published by the Ministry of Agriculture ^{214]}
 and distributed free, prints only 48,000 copies. ^[658]

The scientists, scholars, and men of letters who come to ^{E 814}
 Egypt every year for congresses or conferences find in Cairo ⁸¹⁵
 or Alexandria audiences as eager and open-minded as those
 of Paris. They are astonished and say so.

Thinkers and students are busy creating a national ^{E 812}
 language, a national music, a national theatre and cinema, ⁸¹⁴
 something which shall be specifically Egyptian, and not ⁶⁴¹
 just vaguely Islamic. It is very interesting to follow this ¹⁷⁸
 development of culture. But we must turn aside to see
 what is happening below.

Have the masses been caught up in this tide of renewal? ^{E F}
 Are they following the élite of the cities? The answer is: ³⁶⁹
 either not at all or at such a distance that no movement is ¹⁷⁸
 discernible. Illiteracy still prevails among an overwhelm- ²¹²
 ing majority. The latest statistics have had to recognise ^E
 it. (") It may be that the fault lies with the English, who ^{F 636}
 developed everything in Egypt except education; with the ¹⁸¹
 fellaheen themselves, who are not very gifted and show no ⁸⁷¹
 eagerness to learn; or with a syllabus ill-adapted to their
 mentality and forced upon them with compulsory educa-
 tion. Whatever the cause the fact remains that 95% of ^F
 the fellaheen can neither read nor write. Even if they know ²¹²
 how to read, they remain strangers to all interchange of

212 ideas, for the literary language in which books and newspapers are written is unfamiliar to them ('').

184 The weakness and the sufferings of the fellaheen arise from their abysmal ignorance in a fast-progressing world. The revival which has just been described only accentuates their isolation and dependence.

● 178 At the same time, if within the mass no substantial changes can be recorded, outside it some progress may be seen, and inside there are some signs of future evolution.

There is a certain growth in the sense of social responsibility. Progressive Egypt is beginning to pay some attention to unprogressive Egypt, clumsily it may be, by fits and starts, and as yet more in theory than in practice, but at least with the desire to help those who cannot help themselves.

641 Today the fellah has legal rights. He is no longer sub-
466 ject to forced labour at the good pleasure of his masters.
671 There is a code of law, and judges to apply it. It is true that the fellah does not always know how to make use of this, but the law exists, where formerly there was no defence.

641 'To put an end to the cruelty of the pasha, to let the
636 fellah's wife and frightened child have what belongs to them', such was the work of Lord Cromer at the end of the nineteenth century (''). This High Commissioner, who gave much thought to the fellaheen, used all his power to obtain for them at least strict justice. The lash was made illegal, and
[651] taxes were fixed at reasonable rates and periods. The fellah
[681] is no longer in constant terror of the *sarraf*. He knows
[731] how much he has to pay, and realises that if his field has suffered from flood, drought or fire, the tax is remitted.
661 The venality of officials and the selfishness of big landowners often nullify the benefits of these measures. But they have their effect.

In 1912 Lord Cromer's successor, Lord Kitchener, also caused a law to be passed in favour of the fellah, whereby the dwelling of the small farmer, his necessary implements, two of his cattle and five feddans were exempt from seizure. To make the fellah's finances sounder and accustom him to some kind of system the same High Commissioner established Savings Banks in the villages, where the fellah was to
[453] keep his savings. This institution, perhaps because it was

CONCLUSION

THE DISTRESS OF THE FELLAH

In comparison with the fellah's miserable lot a century ¹⁷⁸ ago or under the Mamelukes, his present situation is an un-⁵¹¹ doubted improvement. He can no longer be killed like a ⁷³⁵ dog, plundered at will, or commandeered as a slave.

In comparison with the woes of the negro, Malagasy, ^[171] Chinese, or Tonkinese peasant, the fellah might seem even more fortunate. He is undernourished but does not die of hunger. He has clothes to wear, and, when holidays come round, money to spend on amusements.

True, but there are two kinds of poverty. There is ⁷³⁵ physical poverty, which means insufficiency of resources ¹⁸⁵ and a lack of the conditions necessary for the maintenance and development of physical health; and there is intellectual and moral poverty, which means ignorance and a lack of human dignity, no less essential to the life of the spirit.

Physical poverty has a more immediate effect on the worker and, precisely because it is more noticeable, arouses more pity. Hence all these efforts to improve the fellah's house, his health, and his finances. Hence also the habitual tone of his complaints, and of the speeches made about him. "This is no new question, but a subject that has figured in every Speech from the Throne since the beginnings of our parliament. We are not suffering from a diversity of evils, each of which can be treated separately, but from a single fundamental evil, and that is the low standard of life of the masses of the people in the countryside; a standard so low that it offends all human feelings, and stains the reputation of our country. The people of Egypt is not composed of those 160 or 200 thousand persons who are comparatively well off, but of sixteen million souls" (").

In this low standard of living we must also include moral ⁵¹¹ poverty, which since it affects the very sources of human life ⁷³⁵

9: Klunzinger D-5 (1863-1875) 1878
MR13 Fellahin MR13
Upper Egypt

CEREMONIES PRELIMINARY TO FAMILY FESTIVALS. 187

it, and lets the sweet fluid trickle from his consecrated mouth into that of the child, and "gives him the name out of his mouth." This is accordingly a kind of baptism. It is well known that among the Moslim, as among the native Christians, and till lately among the Jews of the West, only personal (and not family) names are used even in public life. For distinction the personal name of one's father is joined to one's own name, as Mohammed Soliman, that is, Mohammed, son of Soliman. Many have of course a surname, but it is generally personal, as for instance, the Bald, the One-eyed, the Falcon, and so forth, and only in rare cases is retained as a family name. In recent times the desire of acquiring a family name is showing itself, especially among government officials. This custom has of course the advantage that it leaves no room for pride of noble or patrician descent. Only the descendants of the prophets, the *sherifs*, of whom there are millions, pride themselves on their birth, and generally marry only among themselves. Still more the Bedouin, who is said to be able to repeat his pedigree in personal names alone up to Abraham and Adam, like the genealogies in the Bible, and who knows the pedigree of his horse equally well.

On the fortieth day after childbirth the mother goes with the child to the bath, and gets forty dishfuls of water poured over her head if her offspring is a boy, and thirty-nine if it is a girl. The child also is now bathed for the first time, and mother and child are now clean and purified.

CEREMONIES PRELIMINARY TO FAMILY FESTIVALS

The more important family festivals, as a circumcision or a marriage, are often preceded by a whole round of preliminary ceremonies that last for weeks, or even months, and take place every evening. The master of the house prides himself in giving a feast that will be long spoken of. Every evening he gathers together his friends in his hospitable dwelling, and provides for them amusements and entertainments of every form and kind. At present chess, draughts, dominoes, and other games are played, but not for money, or at most for a